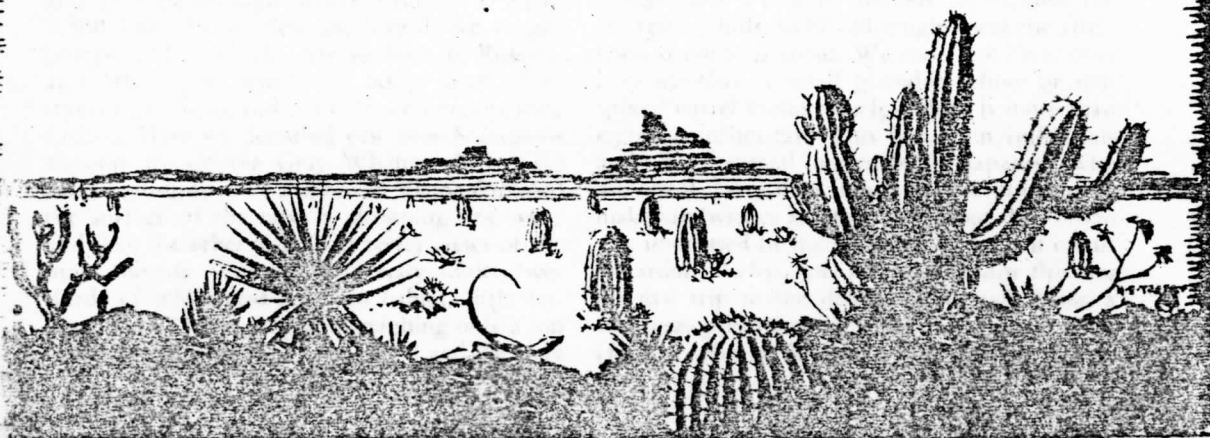


CACTUS AND SUCCULENT JOURNAL

VOL. XXXV MAY-JUNE, 1963 No. 3



Dr. Reid Moran of the Natural History Museum of San Diego, California, collecting on Angel de la Guarda Island.



A Flying Trip for Cacti

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Airplanes make possible quick collecting trips to regions which heretofore were accessible only to those few fortunate people who had unlimited money. Such a place is Isla de Cedros, which lies off the west coast of Baja California, Mexico, about 350 miles south of San Diego.

For many years Mr. Tokushiro Kaku, an avid Japanese cactus collector and Technical Advisor to the new Manazuru Botanical Garden near Tokyo, dreamed of visiting Cedros. Two years ago, on a flight to our field station at Bahia de los Angeles, Mr. Kaku looked longingly across a hundred miles to where he could see the peaks of the island emerging from the Pacific fog, and I promised that someday I would take him there. The opportunity came in January, 1963, when Mr. Kaku and his friend Mr. Hiroshi Hirao, Editor of the Japanese Cactus Journal "Syaboten," visited California.

Arrangements were made with Captain Francisco Munoz, owner of the Baja Flying Service, to charter a twin Beechcraft plane for the trip. Isla de Cedros has a village with more than 1,000 inhabitants but is not equipped for tourists. Francisco optimistically sent radiograms asking that accommodations be provided us, but we fully expected to camp under the wing of his plane and took sleeping bags, water, and food.

Our party included Mr. Kaku, Mr. Hirao, John Sloan of our museum staff, and his wife Priscilla who is with Scripps Institution of Oceanography. After packing the plane and clearing our papers with the Mexican immigration officials, we took off from the Tijuana Airport at 9:30 a.m. My friend Victor Corral piloted and climbed through broken overcast to about 7,500 feet. As we flew southward, we caught glimpses of Ensenada, Arroyo Seco, El Rosario, and other spots which are hours apart when traveling by land, and at 11:05 we were opposite Cedros. Here we detoured east over Scammons Lagoon, to see the Gray Whales which were congregating to calve and breed. Victor skimmed the surface of the lagoon, dropping one wing and then the other to give us better views of the huge animals. We saw about sixty adults, two-thirds of which had newborn babies, little fellows 14 to 17 feet long and weighing only a ton or so! Visibility was not very good and we were

too early to see the main aggregation—last year we counted 427 whales in Scammons on a museum whale census flight. But our guests had some fine views of the marvelous mammals before we headed for Cedros.

A short landing strip is located on the beach near the southwest corner of the island, about five miles south of the village, which we "buzzed" to inform any potential hosts of our arrival. We were relieved to be met at the strip by Sr. Roberto Sánchez Carrillo, a young merchant at Cedros, who had received Francisco's message and assured us that we would have a place to stay. We offloaded the plane and Victor departed on a flight to Bahia de los Angeles.

Roberto had a pick-up truck into which we loaded our gear and ourselves, and started toward town. The southeast corner of Cedros is barren, and Mr. Kaku laughed to think that this was the isle of his boyhood dreams. Soon, however, we were away from the windswept beach, and found that recent rains had made a flower garden. Elephant trees, *Pachycormus discolor*, were green with leaves, as were the other normally naked desert shrubs. Bushes of *Rhus laurina* and the endemic Cedros Lemonade Berry, *Rhus lentii*, were covered with flowers. It was spring in January and the sun shown warm and bright as we drove on toward the village. Suddenly someone saw a flash of scarlet, Roberto stopped, and we examined and photographed our first specimen of the endemic cacti of Cedros, *Cochemia pondii*, a clump of pale stems a foot high, each topped with several scarlet tubular flowers.

Roberto had arranged for a luncheon in the village, but we were anxious to explore the interesting hills, so he obligingly spent the afternoon driving us about. We soon saw *Ferocactus chrysacanthus*, a small globular yellow or red-spined barrel cactus which seldom is more than eighteen inches tall. This is rare in collections and was of special interest to the Japanese, who are great *Ferocactus* fanciers. We stopped to make sandwiches and to tramp about. Mr. Hirao was impressed by his first view of a giant cactus or cardon, *Pachycereus pringlei*, because this was his first trip to the desert. *Agave sebastiana*, a trim gray-green century plant, grew singly or in clumps. John walked up a broad sandy arroyo

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and soon found several specimens of *Mammillaria butchisoniana*, a widespread species which Howard E. Gates discovered near Calmuelle in 1933. It is now known to occur through most of Baja California and on Isla Natividad, but it had not before been recorded from Cedros.

The afternoon passed quickly. Roberto drove us about on roads which were recently bulldozed by a mining company investigating deposits of asbestos. It was Sunday and the very few cars and trucks on the islands all seemed to be carrying loads of people out for picnics. We stopped from time to time to collect or photograph plants. Finally Roberto took us on into the village, a prosperous little community whose economy is based on a cannery which packs abalone and sardines. Mr. Francisco Amaya, Manager of the cannery, gave us rooms in a comfortable guest house which belongs to his company, and introduced us to Mrs. Garcia, who was most gracious in spite of having had a meal ready for us since midday. John and Priscilla took advantage of a low tide and the hour or so remaining daylight to collect marine invertebrates from an area of exposed rocks. We were hungry and enjoyed Mrs. Garcia's delicious dinner of broiled lobster and other seafood, tortillas and beans, and quite unexpectedly, lemon pie.

We spent the evening with Mr. Salvadore León Huerta, a Federal Fisheries inspector and an excellent amateur photographer. The visit was official, because our permits were examined, but only after a long preliminary discussion and invitation to sample various Mexican liquors. Mr. Hirao, the most courageous of our group, learned the technique of downing tequila in a straight shot, followed by a dash of salt and lemon juice.

After our plants were cleaned and packed the next morning Roberto drove us up a steep mountain road which led to a large spring, the source of water for the village. We stopped frequently to examine plants. Tiny, hooked-spined *Mammillaria goodridgei*, which apparently is endemic to Cedros, was found in great quantity, although we had failed to spot them the previous afternoon. The little plants grew between rocks on the exposed slopes, and some were in flower.

We were very surprised to also find low growing and tuberous rooted *Mammillaria blossfeldiana* until then unknown on Cedros, growing in the same area.

Finally the road became so steep we could go no farther. It was a beautiful spot, with a fine view of the village and wharf far below. A motor vessel which had tied up at daylight to unload supplies for the cannery gave a blast of its whistle and backed away from the dock, then turned south on its run to La Paz. Fishing boats came in with loads of sardines which were transported into the cannery on endless belts. But close at hand the windformed elephant trees among massive boulders gave the landscape an oriental appearance, and our Japanese friends suggested that here was a ready made botanical garden.

The morning passed rapidly. Just before noon Francisco Munoz "buzzed" the town to let us know our transportation had arrived. We drove back down the mountain, lunched with Mrs. Garcia, bid goodbye to our new friends, and soon were loading our plants into the plane. We had collected *Ferocactus chrysacanthus*, *Cocheminea pondii*, and *Mammillaria goodridgei*, all of which are endemic to Cedros, as well as *Mammillaria butchisoniana* and *M. blossfeldiana* which apparently had not before been collected there. We also took one specimen of a heavy-spined form of yellow flowered, mound forming *Echinocereus maritimus*. Three other cacti are known to occur on Cedros; *Pachycereus pringlei* as widely scattered specimens; the coastal cholla, *Opuntia prolifera*, which chokes the mouths of some arroyos along the northeastern side; and an as yet unidentified *Platypuntia* which grows along the pine trees which crest the higher peaks.

Francisco taxied to the far end of the runway. "revved up" the engines and suddenly released the brakes in order to gain speed rapidly for the short field take-off. Waving friends and the line of breakers flashed by as we became air-borne, and we headed north toward home.

Plants collected on this trip were taken under a permit from the Secretaría de Agricultura y Ganadería de México issued January 18, 1963, and signed by Ing. Alfonso Loera Borja.

Page 73: Top left; the top of Isla de Cedros emerging from the Pacific fog. Top right; we "buzzed" the village to inform our hosts of our arrival. Center left; Mr. Kaku, pilot Victor Corral, Priscilla and John Sloan, and Mr. Hirao when we landed on Cedros. Center right; *Cocheminea pondii* formed clumps of stems about one foot tall. Bottom left; Mr. Hirao and Mr. Kaku with an Elephant Tree, *Pachycormus discolor*. Bottom right; Mr. Kaku supervised the collection of a *Ferocactus chrysacanthus*.

